

## BARE FACTS

**T**HIS was his moment. For the first time he was within a fair chance of winning his first major tournament. And after a hard-fought 15 holes in the final of the Match Play Championship against that terribly formidable opponent, Eric Brown, with the match all square, there was Ross Whitehead driving off the 16th tee.

Brown had already driven: too far left, leaving an awkward second shot across the dogleg corner to the green. Now we watched Whitehead; he swung in the distance with what looked like perfect steadiness and calmness; and up flew the ball—ruled on the perfect line to the right hand, high side of the fairway. It sailed along towards us, dropped, bounced and began to run to exactly the point most definable in theory as “position A”. Two yards short of us it came to rest—on the most horrible patch of bare, hard-beaten ground. It left him a lie for his long iron to the green from which it would take only a real master of method, with nerves of iron, to strike with any certainty the ideal controlled shot straight to the pin-side.

To Whitehead's vast credit, he banged his up safely enough (though it looked a shade thin and faded) on to the green, and went on to lose only at the 19th.

### Under Pressure

As the crowd went on up the 16th I stopped behind to examine the spot from which he'd played this shot. There was hardly a divot! Just a slight scuff on the soil. Whitehead, in fact, had had to take the ball almost absolutely clean—at that stage of maximum psychological pressure in his biggest match yet.

It didn't seem fair, then, and it doesn't now. And the evil genius behind that lie, as with so many other horrible brutes of lies nowadays, is—the trolley!

What greenkeepers in general feel about trolleys, I don't know. In public they seem nearly always patient and philosophic men—however they may ex-

press themselves in private. But—as I seem to remember a correspondent saying in this magazine last year—the trolley has become a real menace in its evil effect on fairways.

The 16th at Walton Heath is not the only hole there badly affected. I was not looking closely at every hole from that point of view at the time, but I did notice that much of the fairway at the long 14th was sadly bare and worn; and off course the problem is general—even on courses where major events are played. At many less famous courses, particularly those on dry heathland, trolley wear has already become a nearly disastrous problem.

**John  
Stobbs**

As we all know, what happens is this. Most golfers take much the same path up most holes, especially going off from the tee through the fairway and then coming in again to the green; while any sort of obstruction like a mound, a ditch or a bunker, concentrates them all on the same route, time and time again. For some reason not yet scientifically established (so far as I know), the narrow, hard wheels of a trolley laden with a set of clubs and not much else have a vastly greater capacity for wearing and destroying the springy turf than the feet of a 15-stone man walking. Perhaps it is the fact that feet come down flat and then lift up again, while a wheel, in rolling, forces its way through the turf, continually trying to push it ahead of its own pressure—rather like a skater running along over softening ice, with a bow wave ahead of him. Certainly the resistance to pulling a trolley through turf—which is considerable if you stop and sense it on your hand and which can often become very tiring—can in itself be only a measure of the resistance continually being overcome by the wheel against the turf. Resistance involves pressure and friction—which does the damage!

It follows straight from this, of course,

that the more a trolley can be designed to run easily behind a player, with least "pull" needed, the less damage it is doing to the turf! In other words, the interest of the greenkeeper in maintaining his fairways in good springy state and the interest of the golfer in the work he has to do pulling his trolley exactly coincide.

### Hard Pulling

This makes it all the more remarkable—and, as so often in this world, in fact absurd!—that trolleys are still such hard work to pull around over good quality turf. In fact, the thicker the turf the harder the work—and the more damage done! With due respect to trolley-makers (who, after all, can only run their businesses by giving the player what he *thinks* he wants), the present type of trolley with the small wheels and hard tyres is really designed to run best only on concrete or other hard, smooth surfaces—such, indeed, as the sort of hard-packed worn ground the trolleys themselves create! And that the only ultimate salvation of the turf on our fairways—which had better come quickly, by the look of many of them—lies in some enterprising maker setting out to design one to pull its load over good turf with the minimum possible effort from the puller.

Taking the parallel of the human foot, it looks straight away as if some sort of small scale caterpillar tread (i.e. like a miniscule tank-track) would be the best answer. Instead of moving forward through the grass, this would just lay itself down continually over it and then pick itself up again as the trolley went

along. It could best be about 6 inches wide on either side, running for about a foot or so between two rollers (each ball-bearinged to offer minimum friction in traction, of course). The tread could be of soft rubber—or even (why not?) rubber with spikes on it, aerating the surface of the fairway all the time as it went along.

It would be better on the whole if the track itself didn't come off the rollers, break, dissolve or otherwise baffle or annoy the player too much or too often. And at least one roller on each track would need to be on a sprung arm, so that the whole set-up ran easily over irregularities in the ground.

An alternative, of course, would just be a much larger diameter wheel, with a broad sorbo-type or soft pneumatic tyre on it. But one maker brought something slightly in that direction in when he put his first trolley on the market just after the war. The small wheels and hard tyres, cheaper, soon forced him to abandon it.

### Strike Action?

Golfers, like all other people, even when they admire the best, don't necessarily adopt it—especially if the second best is cheaper. It'll probably take national agreement and legislation—or possibly even a national strike of greenkeepers (what an arresting idea!) to get any trolley improvement adopted all round. And if it isn't ever adopted all round, it'll have little effect.

But golf's a difficult enough game, isn't it, without having to play it off constantly worsening lies.

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